

10th Anniversary

NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS PANEL



Building on the Momentum...

GOALS



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PARENTAL PARTICIPATION

10th Anniversary

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The Honorable Paul E. Patton



n behalf of the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP), it is my pleasure to present *Building on the Momentum...*, a collection of essays from leading educators and education policy experts from across the country. I think you will find the essays to be stimulating and sometimes provocative reading.

While we can celebrate significant progress toward achieving the National Education Goals and in improving our education system, we also know that much more remains to be done. Realizing our shared goal of making a world-class education available to every child in America will require us to continue — and intensify — our efforts into the next decade and beyond.

Richard Elmore of the Harvard University Graduate School of Education has observed that one of the strengths of the NEGP is its ability to identify the big issues in education reform and help forge a national consensus on resolving them. Our purpose in commissioning these essays was to seek out some of the best thinkers to identify the ongoing and new challenges we must address in our nation, states and communities in our ongoing efforts to improve American education.

The authors presented herein have not disappointed. They have given us thoughtful, insightful and creative responses representing diverse points of view. Their thinking is valuable not only for helping to inform the deliberations of the NEGP but also for informing the thinking of all Americans who care about the education of our children. I commend them to your attention.

Sincerely,

Paul E. Patton

Chairman (1999), National Education Goals Panel
Governor of Kentucky

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Building on the Momentum...

The 10th anniversary of the Charlottesville National Education Summit is an appropriate time to reflect on what has taken place in education reform since that historic event and the creation of the National Education Goals. Has this bold venture to improve American education worked?


We at the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) are convinced that it has. We know that many of the objectives in setting National Education Goals already have been achieved. State policymakers, members of the business community and respected leaders in education affirm that the Goals have helped stimulate critical education reforms that have moved the nation and the states forward. Our challenge now is to build on that momentum into the next decade of reform and beyond.

The Goals and the NEGP have improved the state of education in this nation through a number of important actions.

Focusing education improvement efforts on results

The Charlottesville Summit was the first time in the history of American education that national and state political leaders from both parties, with diverse views on education reform, reached consensus on what the nation's highest education priorities should be. Setting National Education Goals effectively elevated education reform to the top of the public policy agenda and has helped keep it there for a decade.

Because the Goals focus on results, they have helped change the way states judge the success of their education systems. Previously, states were concerned primarily with monitoring inputs, such as funding and facilities, and compliance with rules and regulations. Today, desired results and accountability for student learning drive policy decisions. Thirty-six states now issue annual report cards on individual schools' performances, and five more states are expected to do so by 2001. Nineteen states routinely identify low-performing schools as part of state accountability plans to target support and raise student achievement. The NEGP's own annual state-by-state reports have helped keep public interest in education high and



have helped exert pressure to improve results at the state level, where critical education decisions are made.

Sustaining strong, broad-based support for education reform over the last decade

Historically, education reform efforts in the United States have not had much staying power. Changes in educators' priorities or in leadership at the national, state and local levels often signaled abrupt changes in the direction of education policy before the results of education reforms could be fully realized. Before the Charlottesville Summit, decade-long commitments to educational improvement were virtually unknown.

The National Education Goals are an exception. Although there have been changes in presidential administrations, congressional leadership and the gubernatorial leadership of nearly every state during the past 10 years, the Goals have remained constant. The NEGP's bipartisan, intergovernmental structure has helped provide the consistency and continuity required to sustain a focus on long-term education improvement efforts.

The decade-long commitment to the Goals has been sustained in the American public as well as in the political leadership. A 1990 *Phi Delta Kappan*/Gallup poll administered shortly after the Charlottesville Summit revealed widespread support for the Goals, even though Americans were skeptical that all of them could be met within 10 years. Public Agenda's 1998 review of public opinion data on education concluded that the public continues to believe that the educational improvements called for in the Goals are important and that achieving the Goals would benefit the nation and individual communities.

Helping to launch and support academic standards


Prior to the Charlottesville Summit, policymakers rarely discussed standards in education. Standards that did exist usually were set at very low levels in order to define minimally acceptable levels of performance for promotion from grade to grade or for graduation from high school.

Over the past 10 years, the nation has witnessed an unprecedented effort at the national, state and local levels to set more rigorous academic standards and design more challenging assessments. The NEGP played an important role in supporting this movement, calling for the development of world-class academic standards in key subject areas to inspire greater effort from students, encourage higher levels of achievement and measure progress.

The NEGP joined forces with numerous professional organizations, states and school districts to advance standards-based reforms. Voluntary national standards have been created in the academic subjects specified in the student achievement goal (Goal 3) and have served as models or resources for the development of state and local standards. Every state but one has adopted challenging statewide standards in some subjects, and 40 states have established standards in the four core subjects of English, mathematics, science and social studies. Forty-eight states report that they have statewide assessment systems, and 39 states have aligned their assessments in one or more subject areas to measure progress against their standards. Though much work remains to be done, there is widespread agreement that the longevity and success of the academic standards movement to date have been extraordinary.

Supplying comparable data to enable states to monitor their progress toward the Goals and benchmark their educational performance against the best in the nation and the world

When the Goals were adopted and the NEGP was charged with reporting progress toward their attainment, the NEGP insisted that only comparable state data be reported to ensure that state comparisons would be fair. The NEGP also decided that its annual reports would focus on results, not on how hard states were trying or on the obstacles that hindered their progress. Given these requirements, the amount of information (particularly state-level information) the NEGP could report was meager at the beginning of the decade.




Today, we have significantly more information with which to work. By identifying serious gaps in our ability to measure progress toward the Goals, the NEGP helped focus national, state and local data collection efforts. Over the past 10 years, both the quantity and quality of education data, particularly at the state level, have improved markedly. In 1990, for example, Congress expanded the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to allow the reporting of comparable state-by-state results in mathematics. Since then, the overwhelming majority of states have participated voluntarily in eight state-level NAEP assessments in reading, writing, mathematics and science. States now can benchmark their academic performance in all four core subjects against that of the highest-performing states in the nation, and they can benchmark their performance in mathematics and science against that of the highest-performing nations in the world.

Comparable high school completion rates now are available for every state, and comparable dropout rates are available for 26 states. We now have baseline data on adult literacy rates for the nation as a whole and for 13 states individually. We now have comparable state data for more than 25 states on measures of school safety and student drug use. And soon we will have, for the first time, comprehensive national data on kindergartners and direct measures of their readiness for school.

Informing local and state efforts nationwide to improve educational performance, particularly in the areas of fostering higher levels of student achievement and establishing better learning environments for young children

Although reports show mixed results on many Goal indicators, we know that the nation already has improved its educational performance in several important areas. Since the Goals were established, we have seen significant declines in the proportion of infants born with health risks, and we've seen significant increases in immunization rates among two-year-olds. More parents are reading and telling stories regularly to young children. The gap in preschool participation rates between children from high-income and low-income families has narrowed. More eighth-graders



are proficient in reading, and more fourth-, eighth- and 12th-graders are proficient in mathematics. The proportion of college degrees awarded in mathematics and science to minority and female students has increased, and the overall proportion of college degrees awarded in these areas has gone up as well. The percentage of students who report being threatened or injured at school has decreased.

We also know that some individual states have made remarkable progress toward the Goals and that some have made progress in multiple areas. Fifty states have increased the percentage of mothers who receive early prenatal care. Forty-nine states have increased the proportion of children with disabilities who participate in preschool. Twelve states have reduced their high school dropout rates. Twenty-seven states have increased the percentage of eighth-graders who are proficient in mathematics. Fifty states have increased the proportion of scores on Advanced Placement examinations that are high enough to qualify students for college credit. Thirty-nine states have increased the percentage of high school graduates who immediately enroll in college. Seventeen states have witnessed a significant increase in the influence of parent associations on public school policies. And 23 states have made significant improvements toward the Goals on 10 or more measures of progress.

However, despite these improvements, much remains to be accomplished. Progress has not been uniform across the Goals or across the states. Much more must be done to strengthen teacher education and professional development, improve mathematics and science achievement in the upper grades, reduce student drug and alcohol use, and ensure that our schools are safe and orderly places in which to learn.

Clearly, the Goals are very ambitious and will require continued and intensified effort to become reality. Nonetheless, the hard work of the last 10 years and the successes that have been realized have created a momentum upon which future initiatives can be built. The existence of the Goals has helped inspire the education system at all levels to aim higher and stretch further in order to accomplish more. And that is, after all, the fundamental purpose of the Goals.



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Ronald Cowell



s states and communities take actions to implement education reforms rooted in academic standards, several key challenges confront the standards-based reform effort.

The most crucial challenge is to stay focused and maintain public support for reform. We have barely begun to implement these new systems and have not yet even finished articulating what standards should look like. Before we truly have the opportunity to put standards in motion, we must not allow educators, policymakers and the public to drift on to other unrelated issues. And we must ensure that states and communities continue to support the reform effort during the inevitable tough times. There will be frustration and impatience in awaiting results. Policies that impose significant consequences will make some parents, educators and elected officials uncomfortable. And calls to spend additional funds, retarget the use of existing resources, and reconsider state-imposed mandates and state-delegated local powers may encourage some to retreat.

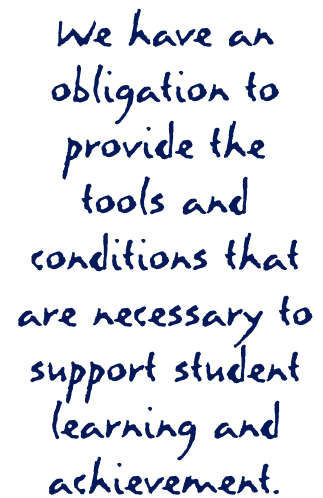
Another big hurdle will be to identify the educational capacity that is required at the building, district and state levels in order for every student to have a meaningful opportunity to fulfill the expectations established by academic standards. In other words, we must clearly define what students need in order to learn. If we are serious about holding students accountable for these standards with any significant consequences, we have an obligation to provide the tools and conditions that are necessary to support student learning and achievement. Of course, the effort to identify necessary educational capacity will evoke somewhat varied responses among states and districts. Nonetheless, educators and policymakers at all levels are working on gathering more reliable information on “what works” and how to serve the needs of every child.

To support the development and maintenance of necessary educational capacity, reform advocates need to push for new local, state and federal public policies. Although we are beginning to understand more about effective capacity, we still have outmoded education systems that are not

designed to foster that kind of capacity. But recently, policymakers and others have begun to better understand how to use policy to build capacity — just as policy has been used to raise academic expectations and increase accountability for performance. In this area as well, states and communities seeking to align policy with effective capacity have the benefit of improved information about “what works.”

Educators and policymakers in states and communities continue to be the key decisionmakers who tackle these challenges. And to maintain direction and focus for those who are crafting reforms, the National Education Goals continue to serve as a valuable beacon. Likewise, the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) is uniquely positioned to further help states and communities meet these challenges.

The NEGP should continue to keep decisionmakers focused on the value of standards-based reforms, help build a national climate that is eager for lasting change, and keep policymakers and educators on task. The NEGP also should continue to promote understanding and responsibility among educators and others about best practices and stimulate and inform the public and policymakers on how to use public policy to effectively support educational capacity — and ultimately help all students to learn and achieve.



We have an obligation to provide the tools and conditions that are necessary to support student learning and achievement.

Ronald Cowell is president of The Education Policy and Leadership Center in Harrisburg, Pa. He served for 24 years in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, where he chaired the Education Committee, and is a former member of the NEGP.

Christopher T. Cross

Within the last decade, the United States has experienced a sea change in public attitudes about schools. Rather than accepting the notion that “anything goes,” we have begun to tighten the reins by creating academic standards for what students should know and be able to do. We also are moving to end social promotion and, in many states, we are determined to end the awarding of high school diplomas to students who do not pass a rigorous set of exit exams.

Having put these policy actions into place, we now are faced with a dilemma. Data from the administration of high school exit exams across the nation show that we could end up denying a diploma to more than 50 percent of our high school graduates. It is impossible to believe that the public and the politicians (school boards, legislators and governors) who respond to the public will permit that to happen.

The likely result of this phenomenon, and states like Virginia and New York may be among the first to experience it, will be to eviscerate the move to higher standards either by lowering the bar or eliminating it altogether. If that occurs, the momentum for significant improvement will have been lost, perhaps for several generations of schoolchildren.


A good part of this scenario is based upon our inability to think in new ways about the high school diploma. We conceive of it as a binary event; you either “earn” it or you do not. Yet the simple awarding of a diploma tells almost nothing about what the student who receives it actually did. Yes, under a standards-driven system, we would know that students had passed the requisite exams, but nothing more. For example, a student might have earned a near-perfect score in math and yet barely passed in English. In the case of Virginia, students may pass with high scores in all subjects except world history and hence fail to receive a diploma. What, then, does the failure to get a diploma mean about a student’s ability to hold a job that uses those other skills? Why not let employers, colleges or other appropriate organizations make that judgment?

Under this plan, a diploma would be more than a simple sheet of paper with an embossed seal and the signatures of a few dignitaries. The diploma itself would be in two forms. The first would be a set of papers that summarizes the student's mastery in the requisite subjects as compared with the standards that he or she was expected to achieve. Was the student capable of mastering the concept of slope in algebra or did he or she know how to compose a narrative in English? Part two of the diploma would be a CD-ROM that contains actual examples of that student's work, along with the student's actual test scores on the high school exit exams. Again, that student's work would be compared with the standards the student had been expected to achieve, but instead of simply seeing the score, the work also would be available so that a prospective employer or college could judge its quality.

The virtue of this approach, which today's technology could easily support, is that it would give real meaning to the diploma and do away with the pass/fail mentality that exists today. It also could serve to inspire students to do excellent work, since some selection of that work would have a shelf life far longer than the time required for a teacher to grade and return a paper to a student and for the student to trash it.

In an annual Gallup Poll conducted by Phi Delta Kappa, the honorary education fraternity, respondents were asked to rate what they viewed as the best evidence of actual student accomplishment. More chose examples of student work than any other item, including test scores, letter grades and teacher observation notes. Almost every week, we hear stories about how employers hire young people who have diplomas and then find that they can't write a business letter, can't make change, etc.

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This new system would place a greater burden on the employer to evaluate a diploma, do their own testing and make some independent judgments. Students, in theory, should be inspired to do quality work, since that work might be chosen to become a part of their portfolio of work examples, hence directly affecting their potential future earnings and/or college admissions.

One of the issues to be resolved under this schema is the question of just what a high school diploma would mean. Clearly, it should be more than a certificate of attendance. It could mean that a student has passed all exams at a certain level and that he or she has excelled in one or more areas — quite a common circumstance.

While a somewhat radical idea, this may be one worth discussing.

Christopher T. Cross is president of the Council for Basic Education in Washington, D.C. From 1989 to 1991, he served as assistant secretary for educational research and improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

Richard F. Elmore

The nation has undergone a seismic shift in its political posture toward elementary and secondary education. We have moved from a system in which there was virtually no discussion among state and local political leaders of what students actually learn — and virtually no state-level information on student academic performance — to a system in which governors and state legislators routinely discuss student performance on statewide tests.

We have moved from a situation in which performance-based comparisons among schools, among states or between the United States and its major industrialized competitors were discussed only in academic circles to one in which such comparisons are a routine feature of political discourse.

On some levels, the transformation to a standards-based system is nearly complete. Virtually all states now have statewide testing systems capable of producing performance data on individual schools, and some form of standards to offer guidance to local schools and districts. On some other levels, the transformation is far from complete. Perhaps only a third of the states have developed, or are in the final stages of developing, well-articulated systems of standards, assessments and accountability measures that can be used to make judgments about individual school performance.

But despite these improvements, the overriding signal coming from state and national opinion leaders is that the old institutional structure of public education needs a substantial overhaul. Schools should become more focused on student results, and state policies should focus more on accountability for student learning, rather than on the input and process regulation that characterized policy in the past.

In light of this, education reform is at a critical stage. Schools and districts are beginning the complex and painful process of adjusting to new expectations. A number of political constituencies inside and outside public education are watching policymakers for signs of equivocation or retreat. Teachers and principals are grappling with new demands, while at the same time calculating whether this reform, like so many others in the past, eventually will fade back into the existing institutional structure.

But even with all the inherent complexities and difficulties of reform efforts, what is truly remarkable is the persistence of the idea that education reform merits a focused national debate and discussion among key political, professional and community leaders to guide its overall course. Equally remarkable is the fact that, despite the partisan wrangling over the exact form the national debate should take, many political and professional leaders have taken the national consensus on education reform

What is truly remarkable is the persistence of the idea that education reform merits a focused national debate and discussion among key political, professional and community leaders to guide its overall course.

seriously and have explicitly let that consensus guide their actions. For the first time in the history of American education, leaders from both political parties have agreed on a broad strategic framework and a set of commitments to guide the overall course of education reform.

Since its formation, the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) has served as a model of how to construct and maintain a bipartisan institution, represent diverse constituencies, and serve as a forum for public debate on progress toward the National Education Goals and the direction that reform should take. The fact remains that the NEGP is the only national institution focused on education reform that has bipartisan representation of political leaders across levels of government. It is a model that can sustain the momentum of progress in education reform and withstand the challenges that lie ahead.

Richard F. Elmore is professor of education at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education and senior research fellow with the Consortium for Policy Research in Education. This essay was adapted from a larger paper prepared for the NEGP, which can be found on the NEGP Web site at www.negp.gov.

Sandra Feldman

In the 10 years since the Charlottesville National Education Summit, a great deal of progress has been made in the quest to raise academic standards for America's schools. In 1995, the American Federation of Teachers began to issue an annual *Making Standards Matter* report to track developments in standards-based reform. In our 1999 report, we found:

- The number of states with clear and specific standards almost doubled during the past five years, rising from 13 to 22.
- While standards in many states still lack sufficient rigor and clarity, virtually all states said they are working toward aligning state assessment systems with their standards. In 1995, only 33 states reported that they had completed this alignment in one or more subject areas; today, this is true for all 50 states.
- There has been progress in efforts to motivate students to work hard to meet higher standards. In 1996, only three states had promotion policies related to standards; today, 13 states have such policies. In 1995, only seven states had graduation requirements tied to students' abilities to meet at least 10th-grade standards; since then, that number has doubled to 14. And in 1995, only seven states had incentives (advanced diplomas, scholarships, free college tuition, etc.) to encourage student achievement; today, 23 states have or are developing such incentives.
- And perhaps most important, there has been significant growth in the number of states that require and fund intervention programs to help students who are struggling to meet high standards. In 1996, only 10 states provided such assistance; by 1999, that number rose to 29 states — almost a threefold increase.

Where we need to go

Although most states still need to improve standards to ensure that they are clear and specific enough to be useful at the classroom level, it is clear that the three National Education Summits and the work of the National Education Goals Panel have begun to bear fruit. However, much more remains to be done. A recent poll of teachers and principals sponsored by the Albert Shanker Institute found strong support for standards-based reform but also serious questions about how this reform is being carried out. Seventy-one percent of teachers and 67 percent of principals


said standards were the right approach but that improvements were needed in the way states and schools implement them. Thirty-six percent of teachers and 28 percent of principals said that standards are being implemented too quickly. And 55 percent of teachers reported serious problems with assessment systems — saying that tests have resulted in a curriculum that is too narrow and that diverts student attention away from mastering the rich academic content that standards are designed to promote.

Serious deficiencies in time available for teaching and professional development also were reported. The poll showed that 64 percent of teachers were “just somewhat satisfied” or “not that satisfied” about “having enough time

to meet all their professional responsibilities” — with 80 percent favoring more paid professional development time “to meet with other faculty members to discuss curriculum, lessons, tests and how to best help students,” even when this means lengthening the school day or school year.

The importance of a skilled and knowledgeable teaching force cannot be overstated. For a standards-based system to work, teachers need deep knowledge of the content areas they teach, a broad repertoire of effective

Training should assist teachers in forming a common understanding of what high-quality student work looks like.



instructional methods and professional development tied to the standards they must help students master. In particular, training should assist teachers in forming a common understanding of what high-quality student work looks like. Although we have not collected data on state efforts in this area, every poll of our members tells us that most teachers believe they have not been prepared adequately to help all students reach high standards.

And finally, while it is encouraging that many more states are providing funds and programs to help struggling students, it is disturbing to note that many states still don't have a real intervention system in place. Efforts to raise standards and end social promotion run the risk of becoming exercises in cruelty and futility unless policymakers and school systems are prepared to step up to the plate and help every child who is struggling in school. More can — and must — be done.

Sandra Feldman is president of the American Federation of Teachers.

Chester E. Finn, Jr.

It's well and good to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the National Education Goals, but it's been a mostly barren marriage. Sure, there are all sorts of organizational progeny — the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) perhaps foremost among them — but we have woefully little to show for our efforts other than infrastructure. The NEGP's own meticulous reports make that amply clear. How characteristic of American education that we try to solve problems by hurling new structures and programs at them. We end up keeping the structures but not solving the problems.

That's because the problems are hard, of course, and real solutions would discommode vested interests, entrenched assumptions and ingrained practices. Such disruption is too painful politically, financially and personally. So instead we create structures, issue reports, enunciate big dreams and then celebrate their anniversaries. Yet nothing really changes.

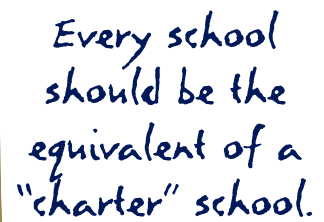
Too cynical? There's nothing wrong with commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Goals, any more than there was anything wrong with celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Charlottesville National Education Summit. I likened the latter event to renewing one's marriage vows: probably a good thing to do, especially if passions were flagging or eyes roaming, but not in and of itself a very consequential action.

After all the celebrations, millions of American kids will remain badly educated. Thousands of U.S. schools will remain ineffective — and sometimes worse. Billions of tax (and tuition) dollars will continue to be wasted annually. Hundreds of thousands of teachers still won't know enough about their subjects. Dozens of states still will have shoddy standards and flabby accountability systems. The federal government's own efforts will continue in the fruitless mode of Lyndon Johnson. And millions of low-income families still won't have the wherewithal to improve their children's situations by changing schools.


What American K–12 education needs is not more celebrations or infrastructure but something akin to a revolution in its ground rules and power relationships.

I've written and spoken in many places about the specific elements that should go into such a revolution. Here is the simplest recapitulation of its five essentials:

- Every state needs a serious standards and accountability system that includes world-class academic standards, informative tests and other feedback mechanisms, and real consequences — rewards for those who meet the standards (kids, grownups and institutions alike) and sanctions or interventions for those who do not.
- Every state needs to encourage the creation and transformation of schools and to ensure that families have a range of choices among excellent schools. There's no dynamism in a static system and no incentive for monopolies to change.
- Every part of the K–12 education enterprise should be judged by (and held to account for) its results — not by its inputs, intentions, credentials or services. While we're at it, that should apply to higher education, too.
- Parents should be empowered with accurate information about their children's academic performance and that of their schools, as well as with the right to change their educational arrangements.
- While being held accountable for their results, schools should have far greater freedom to attain those results as they judge best. Every school should be the equivalent of a "charter" school. It should be deemed a "public" school so long as it's open to all comers, paid for with tax dollars, and accountable to duly constituted public authority, as well as to its clients.



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What's the NEGP's role in this? To monitor and audit, tell the truth, and unmask deception. And to promise no more celebrations until we have results worth celebrating.


A former U.S. assistant secretary of education, Chester E. Finn, Jr., is John M. Olin Fellow at the Manhattan Institute and president of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. He is the author, with William J. Bennett and John Cribb, of The Educated Child: A Parent's Guide and, with Bruno Manno and Gregg Vanourek, of Charter Schools in Action: Renewing Public Education.

Nancy S. Grasmick

The past 10 years have been a dynamic time in education reform. While the seeds of the reform movement were sown in the 1980s, advocates really did not begin to organize their efforts and draw up long-term plans until the start of the 1990s. Since then, standards-based reform has won widespread support and spurred demands for fundamental change from the American public. While some reforms have been implemented and a certain amount of measurable progress has been made in student achievement, huge numbers of students still are being left behind. In order to bring *all* students up to expected levels of performance, we must expand and intensify the current system of accountability to ensure that we are responding to the specific needs of each student.

While standards and assessments have dominated the education dialogue for the last several years, neither standards nor assessments alone will produce students who can achieve at high levels. Both standards and assessments are essential reform ingredients but are only part of the winning recipe. Getting *all* students up to standards will take a much more comprehensive strategy, including a proactive, ongoing and individualized program of academic intervention for students who are not meeting expectations. Such a program will require a fundamental shift in priorities — from gauging average student performance to gauging each student's performance — and will demand nothing short of reassessing the way we use time, allocate money and judge our success as educators.

Ironically, as accountability devolves — accruing more and more to students themselves — we are likely to find educators and administrators held increasingly responsible for the success of every child.



Such intervention practices can be seen in recent policy moves made in Maryland. When the Maryland State Board of Education approved a series of high school exit exams in 1998, it did so with one caveat: that the Department of Education institute a comprehensive pre-K–12 academic intervention program *before* implementing the high-stakes tests. Endorsed by the Board last month, the intervention program hinges upon the articulation and integration of explicit content and performance standards, as well as frequent and varied assessments, so that all teachers know as soon as possible which students are falling behind — and how to get them back up to speed.

The plan adheres closely to advice given by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). Intervention, says NASBE, must begin in the early grades, focus on basic reading and math skills, address the reasons students fail to achieve, involve alternative teaching methods and extended-day or extended-year learning opportunities, and be guided by challenging standards.

Ironically, as accountability devolves — accruing more and more to students themselves — we are likely to find educators and administrators held increasingly responsible for the success of every child. Proactive, ongoing academic intervention like the Maryland program is the only way to ensure that we deliver on our promise to make education reform a reality and help every child succeed.

Nancy S. Grasmick is Maryland state superintendent of schools.

Kati Haycock

During the 1970s and early 1980s, our nation made substantial progress in narrowing the achievement gap that historically has separated poor and minority youngsters from other young Americans. As the 1980s came to an end, though, that progress stopped dead in its tracks, and the achievement gaps actually began to widen again. Our job for the coming decade is to turn that trend around and close the gap, once and for all.

The National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) already has demonstrated leadership in this arena by, among other things, reporting student achievement data by race and calling attention to inequities in curriculum content and teacher quality. In the years ahead, the NEGP should put closing the achievement gap at the very top of its agenda by taking the following steps:

1. Send a clear message that “all” means *all*.

While the language in Goals 2 (school completion) and 3 (student achievement) quite clearly is intended to cover *all* students, many educators — as well as people outside the school walls — don’t believe that “all” means *all*. The NEGP can reinforce this message in the Goals by:

- Reporting state-level data both for all students and for each significant subgroup of students;
- Evaluating states both for overall performance and for progress in closing gaps among groups; and
- Aggressively pressing states to report all of their own data by subgroup and to adopt accountability systems — like those in Texas and Florida — that withhold recognition from schools that do not serve all subgroups well.

It's time, in other words, that we make it clear that schools, districts and entire state education systems cannot be considered effective unless they are doing well by *all* groups of students.

2. Ensure a well-qualified teacher for every child.

Recent research makes it clear that good teachers — teachers who know their subjects and how to teach them — are the single-most important ingredient in high achievement. Unfortunately, in most states, poor and minority students are far less likely than other students to be taught by well-educated teachers. If action on this issue is left to chance, inequities will only worsen over the next decade as a large fraction of the current teacher force retires. The NEGP could help turn this situation around by:

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- Reporting and widely publicizing state-by-state data on inequities in teacher quality;
- Pressing states to implement policies and programs — including recruitment, assignment and training — that are necessary to ensure that poor and minority children have teachers of at least the same quality as those of other children;
- Reporting on and evaluating state efforts to help teachers increase their knowledge and skills, including identifying the extent to which teachers in high poverty/high minority schools participate in these efforts; and
- Encouraging the federal government to provide resources — including student aid, loan forgiveness, a new Teacher Corps and the like — to help states meet this goal.

3. Implement rigorous curricula for all students.

Many schools and districts still have not brought their curricula into line with state standards. As a result, countless students — including disproportionate numbers of poor and minority students — are languishing in low-level curricula that will never get them to high standards. This is especially obvious at the high school level, where some students are taking rigorous courses like geometry, chemistry and algebra while others repeat essentially the same math and science courses that they have had since fifth grade. The NEGP can exert leadership on this issue by:

- Collecting and widely reporting enrollment in “college preparatory,” Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses by race; and
- Strongly encouraging states to bring course requirements for high school graduation into line with state standards and college admissions requirements.

In the end, the list of needed improvements isn’t long, but each element is critically important to achieving the National Education Goals: quality teachers, challenging curriculum and an accountability system that demands progress not just for some students, but for all.

Kati Haycock is director of The Education Trust in Washington, D.C.

David Kearns




fter 10 years of sustained education reform, we have encouraging evidence of progress in reaching the National Education Goals and in improving student academic achievement. The next tasks should be to accelerate the pace of improvement and create education systems in which all students can realize a high level of success.

Two decades ago, American business was in crisis. We were losing market share to international competitors that were producing higher-quality products and doing so more efficiently and profitably. Business leaders recognized that ensuring the futures of their companies and the continued vitality of the American economy required them to undergo dramatic, difficult and often painful change. Many responded by leading their organizations through deep and fundamental restructuring, by setting goals that focused on quality and customer service, and by altering management structures and practices to place greater trust and responsibility in their front-line workers.

In the process, the private sector came to realize that this new way of doing business required higher levels of skill and knowledge among their workers. They also realized that the American education system was not producing — and as then structured, was incapable of producing — enough graduates with the needed levels of skill and knowledge.

In response, many business leaders became committed and passionate advocates for education reform and improvement in student achievement. They were motivated, in part, by economic issues, but also by concerns about equity. Those least successful in our education system were disadvantaged, minority and impoverished students. The business leaders recognized that neither our economy nor our democratic institutions would survive in the face of a growing gulf between societal haves and have-nots.

After a decade of effort on the part of business, education and political leaders, there is good news in education reform. The National Education Goals set ambitious and worthy targets that provide a continuing framework for our efforts to improve results for all children. Business



leaders have become sophisticated, involved and constructive partners for educational improvement. Through the efforts of committed educators and initiatives such as New American Schools, we have clear evidence that all children can learn — and proven models of how we can achieve these results. In addition, states are setting rigorous academic standards and backing them up with aligned assessments and accountability systems.

However, significant challenges remain. The first challenge is that of going to scale — how to get improvements to permeate a large, diverse and diffusely governed education system. The second challenge is determining how to accelerate the rate of change and improvement — in business terms, how to reduce the cycle time. Still another challenge is bringing about the kind of organizational change necessary for success that is widespread and can move all children to high standards. Business has learned that reaching its goal of international competitiveness ultimately requires working smarter — not working harder.

This is an area where business can make perhaps its most important contribution to educational improvement. Business leaders have “been there and done that.” They have streamlined their organizations, decentralized their operations by devolving responsibility to workers closest to the customer, and created structures that support excellence and continuous improvement. They have firsthand experience with the process — goal setting and measurement, customer focus, employee training and empowerment, and data collection and analysis.

The same quality ideas that transformed American business can be used to transform American education. We already have examples of schools where these ideas are working, and in those places, business has assumed a lead role as advocate, facilitator and trainer. Educational excellence is within reach, if we keep stretching toward it, and if business continues to show us the way.

David Kearns is the former CEO and chairman of Xerox. From 1991 to 1993, he served as U.S. deputy secretary of education.

Allan Odden



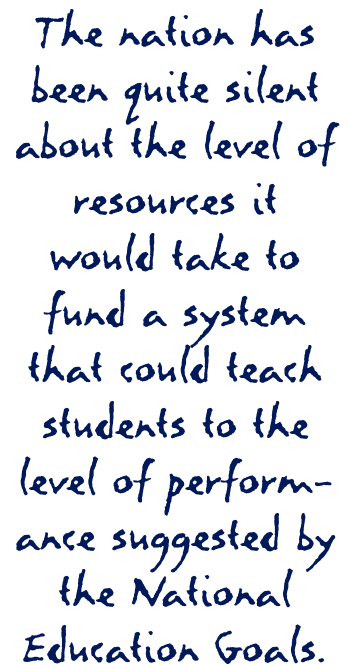
ver the past decade or so, the United States has made tremendous progress in developing curriculum content and student performance standards, two critical elements of a comprehensive education strategy for reaching the National Education Goals. The nation also has moved forward in redesigning its management, capacity development and accountability systems, which also must be part of this reform agenda. And there have been several efforts to ensure that every classroom in America is staffed by a high-quality teacher who is capable of providing the instruction needed for students to achieve to high standards. However, one issue that has been given insufficient attention is that of defining and providing an adequate level of resources for each school to deploy the strategies its students require to learn to the specified performance standards.

Thus, a major new role for the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) over the next decade should be to monitor progress across schools, districts and states toward defining and providing an adequate level of educational resources. This task would entail more than just reporting the level of expenditures per pupil in price- and need-adjusted terms across the states. In the main, such data and adjustments already are pretty much in hand. Moreover, as a first step, the NEGP should report state-average expenditures per pupil adjusted by price and student need.

The NEGP should go beyond previous efforts by attempting to calculate an “adequate” expenditure per pupil for each state, reporting what that level should be and specifying how much this figure diverges from the revenues per pupil that actually are available in each state. Ideally, the figure for the statewide adequate expenditure per pupil would be calculated from the school building up and thus would indicate an adequate spending level per pupil for each school in the state. Producing these figures would require the NEGP to use a number of different methodologies to define and calculate the adequate expenditure level. At present, researchers employ a variety of methods to conduct this task; while these methods produce results that are in the same ballpark, their findings are

nevertheless quite different. The 1997 Government Accounting Office school finance report *School Finance: State Efforts to Reduce Funding Gaps Between Poor and Wealthy Districts*, the 1999 National Research Council report *Making Money Matter* (by Helen Ladd and Janet Hansen), and the 2000 school finance text *School Finance: A Policy Perspective*, 2nd edition (by Allan Odden and Lawrence Picus) describe the different methodologies and could represent starting points for launching this agenda.

The NEGP reports have been useful to the country in developing a set of data by which educational performance could be compared validly across states. But the nation has been quite silent about the level of resources it would take to fund a system that could teach students to the level of performance suggested by the National Education Goals. It is time to add this fiscal element to the information the NEGP reports to the nation.



The nation has been quite silent about the level of resources it would take to fund a system that could teach students to the level of performance suggested by the National Education Goals.

Allan Odden is professor of educational administration at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and co-director of the Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

Edward B. Rust, Jr.


Ten years ago at the Charlottesville National Education Summit, President Bush and the nation's governors urged education improvement efforts to help students achieve a set of National Education Goals. With a corresponding need to measure progress toward those Goals, the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) was created to report on state and national progress; identify best practices; and build a national, bipartisan consensus in support of the Goals.

In response to the Goals set forth at the Summit, standards-based reform efforts have dominated the education agenda for most of the last decade. Nearly all states have implemented higher standards of achievement for students and now are assessing progress through state tests. Social promotion no longer is accepted practice, and schools and districts are working to make diplomas really mean something. Plus, tougher accountability measures for students and educators are holding the education system in general responsible for results.

The role of the NEGP in keeping reform efforts focused has been significant. Imagine picking up the sports page on a Monday morning to read about Sunday night football games or soccer matches and realizing that the scores weren't posted. The NEGP is, in essence, the scorekeeper for the education reform movement. By highlighting successes, achievement and progress toward the Goals, the NEGP serves the unique function of reporting and assessing information and provides comparisons vital to reform efforts in states and across the nation.

Even as school systems implement tougher standards and assessments, a significant number of parents, educators and students still don't understand what really is needed. The next

The next phase of the education reform movement must increase communication about goals and maintain a cohesive focus and direction.



phase of the education reform movement must increase communication about goals and maintain a cohesive focus and direction. Complacency or belief that reform strategies are all in place and working threatens significantly the accomplishment of higher achievement for all students.

Business knows that articulating and building understanding and acceptance of goals is important to achieving results. Monitoring and reporting progress toward the National Education Goals should continue to help us build on the strides and accomplishments of the last decade.

As the NEGP moves into its second decade, teacher development should be an area of increased focus. Studies clearly show that teacher preparation and development have a significant effect on student learning and achievement. In the future, teacher preparation and development programs should be tied more directly to student achievement of state learning standards, and the NEGP should play a significant role in highlighting best practices and effective programs to help link teacher development to achievement.

The economic stability and social order of our country depend on a strong and vital education system. The National Education Goals and the NEGP provide a framework that will continue in the years ahead to keep both state and federal officials committed to working together to achieve these Goals.

Edward B. Rust, Jr., is chairman and CEO of State Farm Insurance Companies. He also is chairman of the National Alliance of Business, chairman of The Business Roundtable's Education Task Force and a member of the board of Achieve, Inc.

Robert B. Schwartz




decade after the Charlottesville Summit, a new political consensus about education reform has firmly taken root in this country. That consensus holds that without clear and rigorous academic standards, assessments that measure student progress against those standards, and accountability systems that hold schools responsible for results, there is little chance that student achievement will improve significantly. Virtually every state is pursuing a standards/assessment/accountability strategy, and even those who believe

Reform advocates need to help make profound changes if virtually all young people are expected to acquire a solid foundation of academic knowledge and skills before leaving school.

that public education needs more market-based accountability accept the central importance of standards. However, while higher standards, better assessments and stronger accountability for results may be essential preconditions for improved performance, by themselves they do not constitute a sufficient reform agenda. Reform advocates need to help make profound changes in school organization and institutional practice if virtually all young people are expected to acquire a solid foundation of academic knowledge and skills before leaving school.

The single biggest challenge we need to face is that of ensuring that all students, especially those at greatest risk of not meeting standards, have continuing access to well-prepared, well-supported teachers. For teachers to be effective in the classroom, they need high-quality instructional materials that are aligned with standards and ongoing professional devel-

opment that is focused on strategies for using those materials to help all students to reach standards.



If we are serious about guaranteeing all students a fair opportunity to meet higher standards, we also will have to restructure the school day and year to provide those who are furthest behind with the time and support they need to succeed. We also will need to expand greatly the opportunities for academic internships and other field-based learning programs, so that otherwise disengaged young people have the chance to see the real-world applications of academic concepts and skills.

Another significant challenge will be to sustain public support while we make these difficult but essential changes in school organization and classroom practice. One of the most remarkable things about this past decade has been the consistently high level of support education reform has received from the public. The act of setting National Education Goals, as well as the production of annual status reports by the National Education Goals Panel, have helped keep the public focused on how far we've come and how far we still have to go. The challenge now is to sustain public determination for another decade, as the reform agenda moves from the adoption of state policies to the successful implementation of real changes in schools and classrooms.

Robert B. Schwartz is president of Achieve, Inc., and lecturer in education at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

THE SECRETS OF SUCCESS IN CONSISTENTLY IMPROVING SCHOOLS

Robert F. Sexton

Not long ago, I spent a Saturday with about 80 very unusual Kentucky teachers, parents and principals. It was one of the most encouraging days I've had in a long time. These Kentucky educators know what they're about. These are teachers whom every parent hopes to see in his or her child's school.

Who are these educators? They are the people who work in the 38 Kentucky schools that consistently have created academic gains for their students. These 38 schools — out of more than 1,300 schools in Kentucky — received rewards for their test score gains every time rewards were given, in 1994, 1996 and 1998. Almost all of them are primary schools. Many have high proportions of free and reduced-price lunch students. They are a small, elite band of steady improvers. Many other schools have made bigger gains, but these schools do it every time.

Not long ago, we invited each school to send a group — including principals, teachers, parents and superintendents — to spend a Saturday talking about what they have done. The idea was to learn from one another and to celebrate their successes.

The room was filled with enthusiasm as these dedicated professionals dissected their work and thought out loud.

Why was the day so encouraging to me? Because these folks talked like serious professionals who are immersed in their calling. They have their acts together.

These educators are focused both on student learning and on their own learning. They know they are responsible for student learning — no excuses — and that they have to learn themselves if they are to teach all students to achieve to high levels.

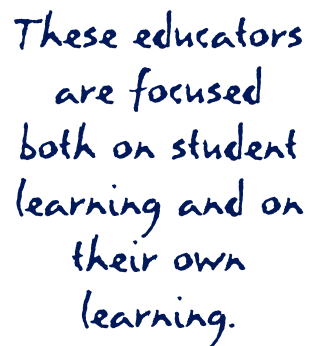
They are purposeful. We asked what they had done to get steady increases in student learning. They said they assessed their situations, sized up the meanings of their test scores, searched out solutions and teaching strategies, found the training they needed, made adjustments, and then asked, "Does it work?" As genuine professionals should be, they

are connected to the larger world of teaching. They know what's happening in their field. They lead. They focus on whether their students learned — on the results — not on getting through the lessons in a textbook.

What did they say accounted for their academic progress? Three things stand out. First, their curriculum is aligned from one grade level to the next. The pieces make sense together — everything fits. The teachers talk a lot with one another, each knowing that what he or she does affects the other teachers. They spend hours on this kind of information exchange.

Second, they work in schools with strong leadership. Principals don't see their jobs as "building managers" but instead as leaders of learning enterprises.

Third, they say the faculty works together — they plan together, share successful techniques, and compare notes on lessons and hard-to-teach youngsters. They are connected to one another. Together, they focus on each and every child.



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What else? They say parents are involved in their schools and that students are motivated. They say good professional development — serious, challenging stuff — is critical. They say they have figured out how to diagnose their students' strengths and weaknesses and learn from their school test scores, and they know how to do something about it. They say their instruction has improved, thanks to leadership, professional development and diagnosis.

All in all, these folks see school improvement as a continuous process — and as their calling. A teaching profession filled with folks like these, led by administrators who know how to help them, is the next frontier of school reform in Kentucky — and across America.

Robert F. Sexton is executive director of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence in Lexington, Ky.

WILL WE EVER REACH THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS?

Maris Vinovskis

When the nation's governors and President Bush met in Charlottesville 10 years ago, they established the National Education Goals. These eight goals have played an important role in spurring our country to action and holding us all accountable for reaching those objectives. But we need more efficient and effective strategies for reaching them.

The focus on systemic or standards-based reform and assessment in the 1994 legislation was helpful but apparently not sufficient by itself to help all students achieve the high expectations we now have for them. The basic elements of systemic reform should be maintained, improved and implemented. But we also need to supplement these elements by providing more reliable information about how we can reach these worthy objectives — without a mandate from Washington about what should be done in the classroom.

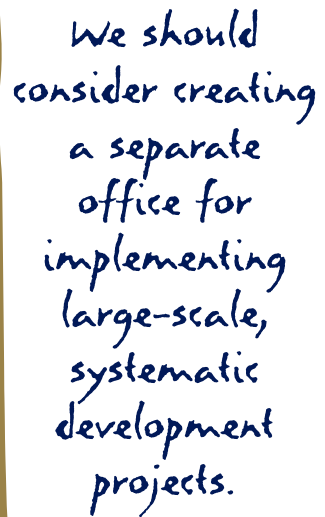
Unfortunately, we still do not know which specific strategies and practices are particularly helpful in different contexts. Neither the Planning and Evaluation Service (PES) nor the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) in the U.S. Department of Education during the past 20 years has been willing or able to produce the type of studies and information needed.

We should consider creating a separate office for implementing large-scale, systematic development projects. Initially, such a program might focus its energies on three to five long-term projects in areas such as developing reading improvement programs or helping at-risk children make a successful transition from early childhood programs into the regular classroom.

Similarly, we could add the responsibility for sponsoring and overseeing serious and rigorous large-scale program evaluations to that office. For the most rigorous and statistically reliable studies, the use of randomized-assignment control groups should be considered — though the high costs of these efforts will limit the number of studies that can be expected to employ this approach. And planned variation projects, building upon the

work of the early 1970s in educational evaluation, can be used profitably in many other instances. Smaller and less-intensive developmental and evaluation projects might be left to PES and OERI.

Oversight of the office's development and evaluation efforts might be delegated to a panel of distinguished experts to ensure the scientific soundness of the endeavors — complemented by a group of teachers and educators who would assist these experts in making the results of those efforts applicable and useful in classrooms. Rather than reporting directly to a federal agency such as PES or OERI, the oversight panel should be supervised by a more independent group such as the National Assessment Governing Board or the National Education Goals Panel. This would help protect the independence and objectivity of the work and ensure that the office's results would be useful to educators and policymakers — rather than just to researchers.



We should consider creating a separate office for implementing large-scale, systematic development projects.

Maris Vinovskis is the A.M. and H.P. Bentley professor of history in the Department of History and Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan.

PUBLIC ATTITUDES ABOUT STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Deborah Wadsworth



pinion research conducted by Public Agenda and others has shown high levels of public support for raising academic standards in the nation's public schools. Americans want students to learn more, and they want public schools to be accountable for this learning. They believe every child should master at the least basic skills — a command of standard English and basic arithmetic — and many want children to learn far more than the basics.

To facilitate this learning and improve academic performance, overwhelming majorities of parents, teachers, employers and college professors say high standards are necessary.

Clearly, the movement to raise academic standards strikes a responsive chord. But strong public support for higher standards does not mean the

issue is immune from the controversies and complications that accompany any large-scale policy change. In communities nationwide, the reality of higher standards is just beginning to set in.

Students are facing new promotion and graduation requirements and tougher tests. In many districts, their chances of mandatory summer school or being “kept back” have increased markedly. Parents, teachers and administrators all are coping with unfamiliar procedures and guidelines. So the question is — given the public's strong commitment to the goal — how can leaders avoid the missteps that could undermine public confidence in standards reform?

School reform advocates need to be prepared to show how they intend to help all children reach these high standards.

To sustain public support for policy change, leaders need to take the time to remind people of the beliefs and values that underlie reform. For most Americans, several beliefs are key to nourishing their support for standards.

- Central to the public's belief in higher standards for students is a philosophical rule of thumb: Ask more from them, and they will do more; ask less, and they will do just enough to get by.
- Americans expect many things from public schools, but teaching the basics repeatedly rises to the top of everyone's list. Americans don't understand how a student can go beyond the basics until he or she has them firmly in hand.
- Educators nationwide now are engaged in a heated debate about social promotion and retention. For many Americans, social promotion without intensive remedial help seems downright cruel; but the heart of the issue is not whether retention is a good idea, but rather that social promotion seems to be an awful one.
- Some advocates worry that many Americans believe that young people, especially disadvantaged children, cannot achieve at high levels. But Public Agenda surveys show that people have enormous confidence in the potential and resiliency of today's youngsters. Seventy-five percent of Americans say that "given enough help and attention, just about all kids can learn and succeed in school."

Public support for raising standards is long established and remarkably stable. But the public's belief in the *goal* of raising standards does not mean policymakers can bypass the fundamentals of sound policymaking. There are pitfalls that could derail support.

- Standards and accountability are not the only education problems people have on their minds. Most Americans doubt that learning can take place in unsafe, uncivil or overcrowded schools with inexperienced and continually changing staff. Very few Americans see raising standards as the cure-all for schools that do not have their basic daily operations in hand.

- No policy reform can hold onto public support if it is not managed competently and fairly, and that means more than just delivering bottom-line results. School reform advocates need to be prepared to show how they intend to help all children reach these high standards.
- Teachers need to be on board. For most parents, teachers serve as the interpreters — even the ambassadors — for reform. Bringing the nation’s teacher corps inside the movement to raise standards could be the most pivotal challenge of all.

A big question for standards advocates is what will happen when tougher tests and more rigorous accountability measures come on line. In all likelihood, some parents will have doubts and begin to complain. The challenge for educators and policymakers is to plan for at least some level of disenchantment and to be prepared to address it.

But another question may be even more troubling: What happens if the nation’s public schools don’t succeed in raising standards? Opinion research can’t predict what would happen in this event but does suggest that this is one question Americans hope we’ll never have to ask.

Deborah Wadsworth is executive director of Public Agenda, a nonprofit, non-partisan research organization based in New York City.

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NATIONAL
EDUCATION
GOALS
P A N E L

1255 22nd St., NW
Suite 502
Washington, DC 20037-7590



Institute for Educational Leadership

1001 Connecticut Ave., NW
Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036